The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci

Translated and Annotated
by
CARL MARZANI

NEW YORK
Cameron Associates
1957

~~$2.00~~

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Many people today believe that some of the most original Marxist thinking in these days of intellectual upheaval in socialist thought and philosophy is to be found in the works of the political martyr, Antonio Gramsci. The great Italian's lucid and stunning thinking, done while he languished in one of Mussolini's prisons, was published at last in Italy in 1947-1954. Since then it has been startling and delighting Marxists everywhere.

Gramsci died in 1937 after serving ten years in prison for his opposition to Fascism, but his thinking has risen like a phoenix from the fires of the controversies raging today. It has given a new freedom to Marxist philosophy, and, in times when dogmatism seemed to have laid its heavy hand on so many areas of Marxist thinking, Gramsci's writings come like a fresh breeze, the brilliant work of a man who may have been imprisoned behind bars but whose thinking was free and whose philosophy was open. As an antidote to dogmatism it has had few peers in the history of Marxist philosophy.

The Open Marxism of Antonio Gramsci is made up of selected essays and notes from the longer works, and have been translated (and annotated) by Carl Marzani.

Gramsci was primarily interested in an area of politics often neglected by Twentieth Century Marxist thinkers, namely, the role of what is technically called the "superstructure" of society, that is to say, the sum total of politics, culture, art, philosophy, science, education, religion, etc. Further, Gramsci

was concerned with how these elements make their influence felt on society and its evolution and revolution; how ideologies and a world view, themselves the product of the economic base, in turn modify, change, and influence—sometimes in opposite directions—that economic base.

Reading Gramsci for the first time one immediately has the strange feeling that though these pregnant ideas may have been scribbled down a quarter of a century ago, they were written for the modern crisis and were anticipating some of the most mischievous aspects of the current crises in socialist thought and action. Gramsci's thinking and method is the living antithesis of the dogmatic. As Mr. Marzani says in his introduction, "Gramsci is a Marxist of the caliber of the early Kautsky, and he compares favorably with Plekhanov and Rosa Luxemburg."

In these essays and fragments Gramsci's concerns are for such currently significant subjects as: how, concretely, do ideas and philosophies reach and influence the masses of people; what is the relationship between the philosophy of the intellectuals and the common sense views of the people; what is the real nature of the problem of intellectual and scientific freedom under a socialist society. His analogies and examples from the Catholic Church's handling of intellectual change and mass dogma is most illuminating. Throughout, Gramsci is concerned with the meaning and influence of the conscious or unconscious world-view of both intellectuals and the people who make up the large proportion of any society, and with the nature of state power.

Every page contains a new and startling penetration into some currently vexing problem, for Gramsci's insights seem almost as if they had been conjured up to aid in the solution of the difficulties which face socialists everywhere.

The Works of Antonio Gramsci

Lettere dal carcere, 1947 (Tenth edition, 1955)
Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce, 1948 (Sixth edition, 1955)
Gli intelletuali e l'organizazzione della cultura, 1949 (Sixth edition, 1955)
Il Risorgimento, 1949 (Seventh edition, 1955)
Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sullo Stato moderno, 1949 (Fourth edition, 1955)
Letteratura e vita nazionale, 1950 (Fourth edition, 1954)
Passato e presente, 1951 (Fourth edition, 1954)
L'Ordine Nuovo 1919–20, 1954 (Second edition, 1955)

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CAMERON ASSOCIATES, INC. • NEW YORK • 1957

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

October, 1957

Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci is a name practically unknown in America, yet he is one of the leading thinkers of the last half-century. An Italian Marxist, he died in Mussolini's jails in 1937. When he was arrested in 1926 he was 35 years old, married, with one child and another on the way whom he never saw. At the time Gramsci was a Deputy to the Chamber (a Congressman) and secretary of the Communist Party of Italy.

After being moved from jail to jail he was finally transferred to a penitentiary in Bari in July, 1928. For the next six years, until his health completely broke down, Gramsci studied and wrote, filling thirty-two notebooks with notes, observations, and essays. He wrote over a million words, which made up six volumes when they were published between 1947 and 1954. States a recent Italian encyclopedia: "The thirty-two notebooks written in prison constitute a very important document of Italian culture. . . . His letters from prison are outstanding as an expression of humanity as well as culture."

Gramsci is a Marxist of the caliber of the early Kautsky, and he compares favorably with Plekhanov and Rosa Luxemburg. He is a Marxist in the great tradition of Marx himself, a thinker with an open mind, disciplined in the search for truth. The daily newspaper *Ordine Nuovo,* which he edited, carried on its masthead the motto "To Tell the Truth Is Revolutionary." Today, when Marxists throughout the world know the consequences of a lack of probity and sobriety in theory and practice, Gramsci's austere words are fresh and invigorating:

> "We must not conceive of a scientific discussion as if it were a courtroom proceeding in which there are a defendant and a prosecutor who, by duty of his office, must show the defendant guilty. It is a premise in scientific discussion that the

interest lies in the search for truth and the advancement of science. Therefore the most 'advanced' thinker is he who understands that his adversary may express a truth which should be incorporated in his own ideas, even if in a minor way. To understand and evaluate realistically the position and reasons of one's adversary (and sometimes the adversary is the entire thought of the past) means to have freed oneself from the prison of ideologies, in the sense of blind fanaticism. One has then arrived at a critical frame of mind, the only fruitful stance in scientific research."

To speak of Gramsci as a Marxist with an open mind may strike many people as a contradiction in terms, because the behavior of a considerable number of Marxists has bolstered ruling class propaganda that Marxism is a dogma. Marxism is not a dogma though there are Marxists who are dogmatists, just as science is not dogma though there are scientists who are dogmatists. Marx himself made this point when he averred that he was no "Marxist."

The deeper one's Marxism the less one's dogmatism. But a prerequisite for deepening one's knowledge of Marxism is to take Marxism seriously. This is the foundation of Gramsci's thought, as it was Lenin's. Marxism is a world view, the modern world view, the greatest the human mind has so far created. World view is a term Gramsci uses constantly. He means by it a system of philosophy so embracing as to cover all of human experience, knowledge, and activity: art, science, politics, economics, sociology, psychiatry—everything. Christianity, for example, is a world view.

Gramsci never wearies of the assertion that Marxism is an independent philosophy; it does not need to be blended with Freud, Jesus, logical positivism, or what have you. It is autonomous, original, capable of inner self-development. Gramsci rebukes a writer on the left in Italy who wrote that Marx was one of a series of great scientists. Not at all, says Gramsci, ". . . none of the other scientists produced an integrated world view. Marx intellectually originates a historical era which will probably last for centuries, that is, until the disappearance of a political

society and the advent of a self-administering society." In a charming footnote he goes on to point out that the left-wing author is less clear-sighted than the Catholic "Monsignor Olgiatti, who in his little volume on Marx finds that the only parallel to Marx is Jesus. For a prelate this parallel is quite a concession, since he believes Jesus was divine."

What most interest and excite Gramsci are the problems connected with the development of a workers' state. He writes:

> "From the moment when the oppressed class comes to power creating a new type of state the necessity arises to construct concretely a new moral and intellectual order, that is to say, a new type of society. This entails the development of more universal concepts, of more subtle and decisive ideological weapons. . . ."

And again:

> "In the phase of struggle before taking power the science of politics is primarily developed; in the phase of state power *all* the superstructure must be developed, *or the state itself may disintegrate.*" [Italics added.—*Ed.*]

Gramsci is the analyst of the superstructure, par excellence. In area after area—sociology, politics, mass psychology, literature, etc.—he deepened Marxism, sometimes going further than Lenin, for in many areas Lenin *acted* as a Marxist but did not write and develop the lessons of his experiences. It is no accident that Togliatti and the Italian Communists have shown such political skill, for the legacy of Gramsci is alive among them. Togliatti was co-editor with Gramsci on the *Ordine Nuovo,* and many of the older Italian Communists learned their Marxism in the political struggles led by Gramsci in the 1920's.

Gramsci is concerned with the problems of transition from the old society to the new, the problems *after* socialist state power is established: the role of intellectuals in such a state, the dilemmas of freedom versus security, all the problems which are today so much to the fore. That is why Gramsci sounds so contemporary; that is why his writings are so important. His insights are bright weapons in the arsenal of progressive mankind as it fights

for man's very existence in the most titanic struggle in the history of the species; as it fights against the dark, sanguinary past embodied in the present, including some somber reflections in the socialist states themselves.

Gramsci's writings are now being translated. There is a profound poetic justice that this Communist intellectual whose voice fascism stifled, physically destroying him in the process, should be heard today at this juncture in history when his insights are most needed and, most important, when his wisdom can be heeded.

Take the problem of freedom of science and art in a transition society which is not stable and where the old ideologies are powerful and operative throughout the population. This is one of the basic problems of contemporary socialist states. Gramsci argues that in a transition state, where the society is not stable, there is the problem of "setting limits on freedom of discussion and propaganda" and he asks who will set these limits, and in fact can "these limits be determined at all"? His answer is unequivocal:

> "I think not. It seems to me that of necessity the search for new truths . . . must be left to the free initiative of the individual scientists—even if scientists continually re-examine those very premises which seem most essential, fundamental, and settled once and for all."

As a political leader Gramsci is aware of the problems which freedom creates for a transitional government and he suggests that while the scientist must be free the results of his inquiry may be subject to examination before being made public.

Gramsci sharpens the theoretical tools of the working class, fighting against the vulgarization of Marxism, particularly its reduction to mechanistic determinism. He can understand its appeal and even usefulness before the assumption of state power, when ". . . the class struggle seems to be a series of defeats for the working class. Mechanistic determinism is then a formidable morale builder, making for cohesion, perseverance, patience, and

stubbornness. The worker says to himself 'I have been defeated for the moment but the logic of history works for me in the long run, etc.' What seems to be an act of individual will is actually an act of faith, a travesty. . . . But when the oppressed class becomes the ruling class, responsible for the economic activity of the masses, then mechanistic determinism becomes a clear and present danger. . . ."

It is therefore time, says Gramsci, to "render a funeral elegy to determinism, burying it with full honors."

In area after area he shows concretely the distinction between vulgar determinism and Marxism. Read *Politics and Ideology,* which he begins:

> "We must fight theoretically as primitive infantilism the attempt to explain every fluctuation of politics and ideology as an immediate reflection of some change in the economic base of the structure."

He goes on to point out in a brilliant passage that the contrary may be true, that

> ". . . any specific political act may have been an error on the part of the administrators of the ruling classes, an *error which historical development rectifies through the parliamentary 'crisis' in the governments of the ruling classes.* Mechanical historical materialism does not consider the possibility of error but assumes that every political act is determined by the economic base of society. . . ." (Italics added—*Ed.*)

To one of Gramsci's acute awareness of the importance of the superstructure in society the significance of art could not be minimized. Literature and the theater, painting, music, all engaged his serious attention. Marx's proud motto from Terence, "Nothing human is alien to me," applies equally to Gramsci. At the very time of the sharpest political struggles with rising fascism, of exhausting party activities, when he was busy with reports and analyses for the movement, busy with editorial responsibilities, writing political and polemical articles, he still found time for the theater and for literature. In some two years he wrote over 150 reviews for the party paper.

In jail the breadth of his interests continues. A single example is here quoted at length to give a flavor of his penetrating criticism. He sees a magazine article on Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt* and he puts pen to paper:

> "It would be interesting to analyze the reasons for the great European success of *Babbitt*. It is not a great book; it is constructed too schematically and the mechanism shows. Its importance seems more cultural than artistic; the critique of mores prevails over art. The existence of a literary current of realism in America which begins to be critical of its mores is a cultural fact of great importance: it means that self-criticism is widening, that a new American civilization is being born, conscious of its strengths and its weaknesses.
>
> "The European intellectuals have already lost this function to a large extent: they no longer represent cultural self-criticism, the self-criticism of the ruling class. They have either become direct agents of the ruling class or have separated into a little caste with no national roots. They laugh at *Babbitt,* his mediocrity, his naive stupidity, his standardized mentality. They don't even think of the question: do Babbitts exist in Europe? The fact is that the standardized petty bourgeois does exist in Europe, but on a regional and local scale, rather than on a national scale. The European Babbitts are historically inferior to the American Babbitt; *they are a national weakness whereas the American Babbitt is a national strength.*
>
> ". . . Babbitt is a philistine in a country in motion; the European petty bourgeoisie are philistines in conservative countries, rotting away in the swamps of a parochialism which preens itself as a great culture. . . . The plain fact is that no European writer has been able to present the European Babbitt. The European writer is no longer capable of self-criticism and therefore he is an imbecile and a philistine—only he doesn't know it."

It should be remembered that this was written twenty-five years ago. In the last few years leading American writers have been shying away from critical appraisal of American mores. If the drift should continue Gramsci's scathing criticism will apply to our writers.

This critique of *Babbitt* shows a remarkable knowledge of American society. Gramsci is very interested in the United States,

as the strongest capitalist power, but he is interested in all aspects of it. His writings are peppered with jottings on our country, though they are of unequal weight. Here are two samples:

> "*On American delinquency.* It is usual to explain the growth of organized delinquency in the United States by reference to Prohibition and smuggling. . . . This is true. But another important factor should be sought in the incredible brutality of the American police. The tough cop always creates the gangster. This factor has been very effective in pushing normal workers into professional delinquency."
>
> "*On American philosophy.* Study the position of Josiah Royce in the frame of the American view of life. What importance and what function has Hegelianism had in this view? Can Marxism expand in America and surpass empiricism-pragmatism without a phase of Hegelianism?"

This last is a most astonishingly penetrating insight. The reader will be well advised to read Gramsci slowly and to ruminate on what he has to say in the light of current arguments on socialism, communism, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, and so on. His paragraphs are packed with meaning.

Gramsci was a *Marxist* theorist, that is, a theorist active in the society of his time. He had nothing in common with those intellectuals who believe themselves arbiters of history and consider it their mission to put, as Gramsci wittily said, "diapers on the world." He was in and of the class struggle. He was an intellectually sober and emotionally passionate activist, a devoted political leader of the working class, acutely conscious of the demands of the time. He knew that Italy was at a turning point of its history; either the working class moved forward to the assumption of power or reaction would win in the most violent and brutal manner. He wrote in 1920:

> "The actual phase of the class struggle in Italy is the phase which precedes one of two alternatives: either the working class conquers political power, opening the way to new modes of production and distribution that will permit a renewal of productivity; or an enormous reactionary victory of the propertied class will take place. No violence will be overlooked

to subdue the industrial and agricultural workers and to subject them to servile labor: they will try to smash inexorably and irretrievably the organs of political struggle of the working class (the Socialist Party) and they will seek to incorporate the organs of economic struggle, the unions and the cooperatives, in the machine of the bourgeois state."

This was written before the Italian ruling class had fully formulated its program in the nascent Fascist Party. The insight of Gramsci was to be dreadfully vindicated in the terrible suffering of the Italian people in the two decades that culminated in the catastrophe of World War II.

They were terrible times, and Gramsci was conscious of his responsibilities, conscious too of the sharpness of the struggle, the need for hardness and he had an explicit awareness of the psychological toll involved, the resulting cruelty and a degree of dehumanization. There is an anecdote of Lenin listening to music and coming out muttering that he mustn't go again because it is too affecting and makes for "softness" and that it is no time for softness or the rabid bourgeoisie will destroy everything. A similar incident is recorded by Gramsci in one of his letters. He writes of his fight with an old, beloved professor:

"In November, 1920, I wrote against Professor Cosmo a violent and cruel article such as can only get written at a critical moment in the political struggle . . . our cordial personal relations of teacher and ex-student were broken."

He goes on to write a moving tribute:

"I conserve of Professor Cosmo a memory full of affection and I would say of veneration were it not that this word does not adequately express my feelings. He was, and I believe him still to be, a man of great sincerity and moral stature, with many streaks of that native ingenuity (originality) which is often a characteristic of great erudite scholars."

A sensitive man, Gramsci, a great man, strengthened by the tens of thousands of fellow-workers whose tenacity, loyalty, and self-sacrifice he recorded for the future:

"The Communist Party today is the only institution that can seriously confront the various Christian churches . . . the Communist is certainly not inferior to the Christian of the catacombs. On the contrary. The ineffable end which Christianity promised its champions was a sufficient justification for heroism, for martyrdom, for sanctity. For those who believe in a heavenly reward and eternal beatitude, the great human forces of will and character do not need to come into full play.

"But look at the Communist worker. Week after week, month after month, year after year, after eight dehumanizing hours at the machine, he goes on disinterestedly to give eight hours to his party, his union, his cooperative. In the history of mankind, he is a much greater man than the slave or the artisan who defied all dangers to go to the clandestine prayer meeting. Likewise Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht are greater individuals than the great saints of Christ."

The tribute that Gramsci pays to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht is fully applicable to himself. Consider this man, for ten years in Mussolini's jails. Even in the most humane prisons, the physical and psychological pressures of imprisonment are a terrible ordeal; what must it have been like in a fascist jail? Add the burden of pain and fatigue as tuberculosis ravages the organism; insomnia, hemmorhages, faintings, deliriums. In August, 1931, the most serious symptoms appear and by March, 1933, the first complete physical breakdown. He recovers somewhat and continues writing until 1935, when he can no longer work as the disease burns the last remaining reserves of the body.

Watch him at work, day after day, fighting with the penal administration and with the government up to Mussolini himself for the right to get a few books, a few magazines. Denied any Marxist writings, he has to quote from memory, paraphrase, use in his study of Croce only what Croce gives of Marx, in other words make his argument on Croce's own grounds. He has to think of the censorship, avoid the well-known words and names, so he develops a code: Marxism is called the philosophy of praxis (from the Greek, to do; practice); Marx is called the founder of the philosophy of praxis and Engels the second founder; Lenin

is the greatest modern theorist of praxis; *Capital* becomes the critique of political economy, and so on.

Yet he continues writing; an assiduous, incredible labor. How the greatness of humanity is reaffirmed by the tenacity of his will, particularly in the last few years as he writes with wasted body, death a hovering companion. The enormous effort is reflected in the physical act of writing. The first notebooks were neat, in a clear and regular calligraphy. At the end, the handwriting wavers, wanders, is erratic and weak. But the thinking remains lucid, vigorous, trenchant, while the style continues poised and professional, spiced with humor, irony, and a genial twist of phrase.

Protest grew in Europe and his release was sought by the most eminent men of the time, including such diverse figures as Romain Rolland and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Mussolini was forced to transfer Gramsci to hospitals in Formia and Rome. But it was too late. Gramsci died on April 27, 1937. He died as fascist troops and Nazi squadrons poured into Spain. Nazism and fascism marched arrogantly forward, everywhere triumphant. Yet eight years later, as spring came again to Italy, the carcass of Mussolini hung by its heels at a gas station in Milan.

Gramsci's thought remains, and Gramsci's example.

CARL MARZANI

New York City
October 15, 1957

Translator's Note

Gramsci's last volume appeared in 1954 and by the following year Cameron Associates had considered a translation. For various reasons the work was postponed until recently leg injuries forced the translator into bed and he began to work. Soon after, it became known that a volume of Gramsci's selected works would be brought out by International Publishers, so the translator stopped.

Nevertheless the material already translated, mostly the philosophic notes, was so interesting and many points so relevant to American problems that it seemed useful to edit it and publish it. The reader should remember constantly that these are notes written in jail, with the facts often taken from memory, the formulations unpolished, the contents of unequal importance. In a real sense, this is Gramsci thinking out loud.

The translator has felt no compunction in removing a few footnotes and a few paragraphs of esoteric references which would be meaningless to the American public. Some paragraphs were cut as repetitious, some terminology rephrased for better comprehension, and coded expressions, like praxis for Marxism, were "decoded."

Preliminaries to a Study of Philosophy

We must eliminate the widespread prejudice that philosophy is extremely difficult because it is the product of professional intellectuals. We must show people that "all men are philosophers," that every single human being has a "spontaneous philosophy" whose characteristics can be studied. This philosophy, which no one can avoid, is contained:

1. In language itself, for words are not only grammatical tools and symbols—they embody as well an ensemble of notions and concepts;

2. In common sense, and what we may call "good sense," that aspect of common sense which most relies on causality;

3. In the popular religions and in the entire systems of superstitions, beliefs, opinions, ways of thinking and acting covered by the term "folklore."

Ed. Note: Gramsci is intensely interested in what and how the mass of the people thinks. He takes for granted that how people earn their living is important; he takes for granted that it influences their thinking, but he wants to know actually how they think and what they think. He therefore sketches a line of attack for a study of their mentality.

This approach is of some interest to Americans who wish to engage in politics, since there cannot be any political strategy or any political activity that will amount to anything if it isn't based, inter alia, *on a knowledge of the mentality of the class enemy, one's own class, and its allies. As an example of analysis of middle classes see Whyte,* The Organization Man, *Simon & Schuster, 1956, and as a modest approach to working class thinking, Swados' essay, "The Myth of the Happy Worker,"* The Nation, *Aug. 17, 1957.*

We establish then that everyone is, at the least, an "unconscious" philosopher since the language itself contains elements

of some world view. Now we move on to a second level, the level of consciousness and criticism, and we pose this question: Is it better to "think" in a disjointed and sporadic manner, through ideas imposed by the environment, or is it better to think critically, examining and rejecting ideas through the conscious activity of one's own brain?

Since every person is a member of some social grouping, the first alternative means that elements of a world view typical of that group are imposed on the individual. That social group can be as large as one's own village or province or it can be as narrow as a single "wise" patriarch or local "witch" with magic powers. The imposed ideas may have originated in the "intellectual activity" of the parish priest or that of a local petty intellectual pickled in his own stupidity.

In the second alternative, conscious critical examination and acceptance of one's own world view mean that the individual's own brain chooses his sphere of activity, consciously participates in world history, and becomes as it were a guide to his own self-development.

Several observations are germane to the above discussion. As we have said, one always belongs to some social group, and precisely to that group where people share substantially the same way of thinking and working. One is always a conformist in some conformism, one is always as it were a "collective man," a person within a social group. The question therefore is to determine or ascertain the historical character of that conformism, of that social group. If a person's world view is not coherent but disjointed and sporadic, then one develops a bizarre and capricious personality. Such a personality will have within it elements of the caveman alongside the most modern scientific concepts, remnants of parochial prejudices from past historical epochs, as well as intuitions of a rising philosophy suitable to the entire human species, united throughout the world.

To criticize one's own world view, therefore, means to make it coherent and unified, and to develop it to the point reached by the most progressive thought anywhere in the world. Such critique

demands the criticism of any past philosophy that has left its mark in the popular mind and in the popular philosophy. The accumulation of remnants of past philosophies in contemporary popular thought is enormous, yet an inventory must be attempted. Above all, it is clear that the beginning of a critique of one's own world view entails a consciousness of one's own self. You must "Know thyself," but know thyself as the product of a historical process.

Ed. Note: Here again it seems clear that Gramsci has put his finger on a problem of our times. In Marxist circles self-criticism has too often been taken to mean discussion of what caused some specific error, or, at a slightly deeper level, the examination and castigation of such superficial characteristics as vanity, rudeness, laziness, etc. Gramsci will have nothing to do with this. He demands that a Marxist study himself, understand himself as the product of an entire historical process. Thus American Marxists might more easily find within themselves large elements of pragmatism, male supremacy, chauvinism, facile optimism, and so on, which are endemic in our society. Perhaps such an examination might show to many that their Marxist world view was not as coherent as they believed; perhaps even that it was not there. Might not the result be a quality of tolerance, an awareness of fallibility without paralysis of the will?

It is impossible to study the content of a philosophy or culture without studying its history. One cannot have a critically coherent world view without knowing its historical development, its connections and conflicts with other world views.

A coherent world view is related to actual problems posed by reality. It is stultifying to think about the concrete present by modes of thought developed in the past to deal with quite different problems, particularly if those problems are completely out of date. Such "anachronistic" thinking cannot make for a unified personality. In social groups where such thinking is prevalent, the most developed modern ideas will go hand in hand with the most backward social positions. The result is to prevent the historical autonomy of that group.

Here is a further thought on language in relation to philosophy. If it is true that every language contains elements of a given world view, then it follows that from any language the complexity of the world view implicit in it can be deduced. The person who speaks only a dialect or understands imperfectly his national tongue will necessarily have a more restricted world view—parochial, fossilized, anachronistic—as compared to the great currents of thought prevalent in the world. His interests will be extremely narrow, tied to his most immediate economic problems. While it is not always possible to learn foreign languages in order to be in touch with other cultures, it is at least necessary to know well one's own language. A great culture may be translated into the language of another great culture since they are both rich and complex and capable of worldwide expression. A dialect obviously cannot do this.

Ed. Note: Gramsci is thinking here primarily of Italy, where substantial portions of the population are still speaking dialects which are incomprehensible to the rest of the population. In some areas even comparatively close villages cannot understand each other's dialects. Obviously the ignorance is enormous and the difficulties of teaching history, economics, etc., are appalling.

But Gramsci's thought has an insight of value into American problems. While our national language is extremely widespread and dialects are not a major problem (though they do exist), and while education is widespread, yet the leveling down of language in the popular press and comic books, and the erosion of intellectual standards in the schools, are resulting in a population which, slowly but perceptibly, is being placed in intellectual blinkers. Coupled with the pervasive pragmatism of our culture, it is becoming increasingly difficult to teach and understand Marxism. It is also the reason for the paucity of first-rate Marxist intellectuals in our country.

One more observation. A new culture is created not only by individual "original" discoveries, but also by the wide propagation of those truths which have already been discovered. These

truths must be "socialized" as it were, so they can give rise to actions and be woven into the growing structure of a new moral and intellectual order. That large groups of people should be led to think coherently about their present problems is a much more important "philosophic" fact than the discovery of a new truth which remains the property of a small group of intellectuals.

* * *

The relation of common sense and religion to philosophy. A philosophy is an intellectual, coherent system. Neither religion nor common sense (the two do not coincide, for religion is an element of common sense) . . . can constitute an intellectual system because neither can be made unified and coherent even within the individual consciousness, let alone collective consciousness. In the past and within limits, coherence and unity were forced "authoritatively" in religion, never by the "free" play of the mind.

Sociologically, the problem of religion is to achieve unity between a world view and a controlling standard of behavior. Such unity can, however, be called an ideology, or directly "politics" as well as religion.

Philosophy in general does not exist; what exists are different philosophies, world views, and one always chooses among specific philosophies. How is this choice made? Is it explicit, conscious, purely intellectual, or is the choice made in a vague, much more complex way? Haven't we often seen, for example, a contradiction between an individual's intellectual concepts and his acts, his standard of behavior? Which, then, should we say is his real world view: that which he asserts logically or that which he shows implicit in his actions? Furthermore, human action is always a social action, it is a "political" action. Can't we say therefore that a person's philosophy is always wholly contained in his politics?

The coexistence of two world views, often contradictory, one expressed in words and the other shown through actions, is not always due to bad faith. Bad faith may be a true and satisfactory explanation for single individuals or even small groups, but it is neither true nor satisfactory as an explanation when this con-

tradiction is found in large numbers of people. Then this contradiction must be the expression of deeper contradictions at a historical and sociological level.

Ed. Note: This passage has a poignant relevance for American progressives. Too many "Marxists" jump automatically to conclusions of bad faith on the part of fellow-progressives, workers and allies of the professional and middle classes whenever they see contradictions between words and deeds. This "devil theory" of history creates political havoc among friends and allies, but it has equally disastrous consequences even in dealing with the class enemy. Contradictions may be due to bad faith, but it isn't always so and only the most concrete analysis of a concrete situation will show which is which. In another connection later on, Gramsci shows that deterministic thinking does not allow for the possibility of "error" on the part of the ruling class. The "devil theory," itself a deterministic concept, does not allow for "errors" arising out of the complexities of ideology.

Such contradictions reflect the following: A social class has its own world view but not as yet consciously. This world view is shown only in action, when the class moves as an organic whole, and since this happens only sporadically the world view is manifested sporadically. This is one reason why the class is not yet conscious of its own world view. However, because of social and intellectual subordination, this class *borrows* a world view from another class and asserts this borrowed world view in words although in action a contradictory world view is manifested. It must be remembered that this subordinate class does believe in the borrowed world view because it does follow it in action in "normal times," that is, when the class is subordinated, divided, and does not act as an organic whole. This discussion shows that we cannot divide philosophy from politics, and in fact the choice and the critique of a world view are a political act.

Ed. Note: The imposition and fostering of a pragmatic philosophy on the population (including the workers) in England and America are a good example of a "borrowed"

world view. It is against this phenomenon that we must consider the current widespread accusations that the American working class is becoming corrupt and "middle class" in its attitude. The fact is that in "normal" times, times of not too great economic and social stress, the working class is always "middle class" in ideology. It is in times of stress that the working class moves autonomously, not according to its "borrowed" ideas but according to its needs.

We must understand how at any time there exist many systems and currents of philosophy, how they are born, how they are propagated and diffused, why the propagation follows certain directions, splits and breaks up along certain "fracture" lines, etc. We must systematize coherently our own thought and intuition of the world and do so critically rather than pedantically. Such an elaboration can be made only within the framework of the history of philosophy, which shows how thought has developed over the centuries and what a great collective effort has been necessary to achieve our present way of thinking. Contemporary thought summarizes all our past history, including errors and hallucinations. Even errors which were made in the past, and corrected at that time, can and do reproduce themselves today and must be corrected anew.

The popular ideas on philosophy may be sought in the idioms of popular language. For example, the idea implicit in the phrase "to take things philosophically." When examined, this idea is not to be lightly dismissed. It is true that it contains an appeal to resignation and patience, and is often used to that end. Yet, more important, it would seem to me, is the appeal to reflection and to the examination of things. The idea is implied that reason is effective, that what happens is ultimately rational. Rational events can be faced and dealt with by concentrating one's own rational forces and not letting oneself be dragged along by instinctive impulses.

Popular writers use similar expressions and idioms and whenever the word "philosophy" or "philosophically" is used there is always the connotation of a concept of necessity which goes

beyond bestial and elementary passions. Such is the healthy nucleus in common sense, what we may term "good sense," which merits development to become unified and coherent. Thus it seems to me that it is not possible to separate what is called "scientific philosophy" from that "vulgar philosophy" which is only a disjointed aggregate of ideas and opinions.

This point, the continuum from common sense to the highest philosophy, poses the fundamental problem of all world views which have penetrated an entire society, namely, how to maintain the ideological unity throughout the social body from the most ignorant to the most sophisticated. It has been the strength of all religions, and particularly of the Catholic Church, that they have recognized the necessity of doctrinal unity throughout the entire community, and have fought against the separation of higher intellectual strata from the lower ones.

The Catholic Church has struggled tenaciously to prevent the formal development of two religions, one for the "intellectuals" and one for the "simple souls." This struggle has seriously inconvenienced the Catholic Church, particularly as the long-range trend in modern culture is to undermine and corrode all religions. In resisting this trend, the clergy has shown a noteworthy organizational ability, especially in the field of culture. Within its own milieus the Catholic Church has stabilized the relations between the intellectuals and the average people. The Jesuits have been the major architects of this equilibrium. They have given the Church a certain progressive orientation to keep abreast of scientific and philosophic developments but with a rhythm so slow and methodic that the mass of the faithful do not perceive the changes. At the same time, these changes are real and offend the die-hard Catholics.

Ed. Note: An excellent recent example of this strategy of the Catholic Church is the encyclical on evolution. The Church could no longer deny evolution without seriously crippling Catholic scientists and the science departments of its universities. The Church therefore has given its official approval to evolution—but only up to Adam and Eve! From Adam and

Eve all humanity has descended. Thus the local priest can tell the faithful that we are all descended from Adam and Eve, implicitly rejecting evolution (of course we're not descended from monkeys!) while evolution is taught at Notre Dame. This kind of thing infuriates the die-hard Catholic Church in Spain and pleases the opportunistic Church in the U.S.A.

One of the major weaknesses of immanent philosophies* has been precisely their inability to forge an ideological unity between the intellectuals and the people. In the history of Western civilization this has been exemplified by the failure of the Renaissance to attract the masses of the people and in part also by the failure of the Reformation in attracting Catholic intellectuals.

Another example of the weakness of immanent philosophies is shown in education. Not one such philosophy has been able to develop a system of philosophical education which could compete with religion in the education of children. The result is that nonreligious pedagogues (most of them atheists) have conceded the teaching of religion by default. There has even developed a pseudo-historical justification for this: the sophism that since religion is the philosophy of the childhood of man, it has to be repeated in each contemporary childhood.

Idealist philosophy in general has shown itself indifferent to cultural movements of "going to the people." Such movements could succeed only if there were a unity between intellectuals and the people such as should exist between theory and practice. If intellectuals are organically of the people, they can develop and make coherent those problems and principles which the people are setting forth in their practical activity. Then a political and social unity would be constituted.

This is only a restatement of the fundamental problem of the

* *Ed. Note:* Immanent is the opposite of transcendental. Immanent philosophies are based on men's minds and/or the material world. Transcendental philosophies are based on God. Most Christian sects are transcendental; materialist philosophies are immanent. Idealist philosophies can be either. I would consider Berkeley a transcendentalist and Kant an immanent philosopher even though Kant to avoid solipsism was forced to bring in God at the end of his inquiry to underwrite his philosophic system.

unity of a philosophical system throughout the social group. A philosophical movement can be a specialized culture for restricted groups of intellectuals or it can be a movement which never forgets to remain in contact with the people while at the same time developing a coherently scientific system superior to common sense. In this very contact with the people such a philosophical movement finds the source of its problems. Only through such a contact can a philosophy become historical, be cleansed of individual idiosyncrasies, become "life."

It may be useful to probe a little deeper in the relation between philosophy and common sense to understand the movement from one level to another at any given time. In philosophy the characteristics of individual thought tend to predominate. In common sense these characteristics are dispersed. You get the general thought of a given epoch in a given popular environment. However, every philosophy is to some extent the common sense of a group of intellectuals, however small.

We need to develop a philosophy which has the possibilities of wide diffusion because it is implicit in practical activity, give it the clarity and coherence of individual philosophies, and then have it become a widespread "common sense" at a much higher level. All this is impossible if one does not feel the necessity of maintaining contact with the people. Marxism should be such a philosophy.

Ed. Note: The discussion of the rise of intellectuals from the ranks of its people is becoming relevant in the United States to an ever increasing degree, particularly in the trade unions. The CIO from the beginning was widely staffed by intellectuals because of the combination of free publication, education, substantial opportunities at the college levels, and the depression which restricted avenues of employment. Many of the unions were led by intellectuals, some formally educated, others self-educated—Bridges, Carey, Selly, Helstein, the Reuther brothers, Emspak, Flaxner, Goldblatt, etc. Today the process is continuing in the staffing of old-line AFL unions as well. At the same time, however, by the pe-

culiar quirk of pragmatism on the American scene, all the intellectuals in the labor movement would rather be caught dead than admit it. Worse, most of them turn their backs on a systematic intellectualization of the secondary leadership in their unions, looking to educating broader and broader strata. Men like Bridges of the Longshoremen, Gorman of the Meatcutters, Emspak of the Electrical Workers, Reuther of the Auto Workers, are widely read, cultured men. Yet their intellectual impact on their unions is minimal. Nor is this a result of political conservatism; left, center, and right operate on an implicit, often explicit, basis of anti-intellectualism. A different attitude is being built up in the UAW and the UE particularly, but the process is slow.

Let us now look at the philosophy of Marxism in the light of this discussion. Marxism seems like a philosophy of intellectuals separated from common people and from common sense. Since Marxism supersedes previous philosophies and modes of thought, it has at the beginning a polemical and critical stance and must be a criticism of common sense. Yet, at the same time, from the beginning, it also bases itself on common sense in showing that every person is in fact a philosopher, that philosophy is not necessarily a narrow specialized science, and that Marxism in particular is not introducing a brand new science in every person's life but rather wishes to develop, make conscious, and make critical an already existing activity.

Marxism must be also a critique of individual philosophers because philosophy has been developed through particularly gifted individuals. Actually we can consider these individuals as nodal points in the development of common sense, at least the common sense of the cultivated strata of society and through them to the popular common sense. Therefore a study of philosophy must show synthetically how problems arise in the development of a culture. That culture is only partly reflected in the history of philosophy, yet in the absence of a history of common sense (which can never be written for lack of data) the history of philosophy remains the greatest source of study. Philosophy

must criticize the old problems, show their current value, if any, or their significance in the past as part of a chain, pose the new current problems or the current validity of the old.

In Marxism, as in Catholicism, the unity between the "higher" philosophy and common sense is assured by "politics." But the difference between the two world views is enormous and fundamental. Marxism lifts up the people; Catholicism presses down on the intellectuals. In Catholicism, whenever the development of history separates the intellectuals from the people, the Church cannot heal this rift by lifting the people to the level of the intellectuals. The Church doesn't even try to; economically and ideologically the task is beyond her. The Church heals the break by imposing an iron discipline on the intellectuals to prevent an ideological differentiation which would be catastrophic and irreparable by resulting in two religions. In the past such breaks in the community of the faithful were healed by popular mass movements which were brought into line within the Church by strong personalities who created various religious orders—St. Dominic, St. Francis, etc.*

The Counter-Reformation sterilized this upsurge of popular forces within the Church. The Company of Jesus was the last great religious order and was designed precisely to stifle popular movements. Authoritarian and reactionary in origin, it has operated by repression and maneuver, "diplomacy." Its birth marked the ossification of the Catholic organism. The new orders that have appeared after the Jesuits have had little "religious" significance and a great deal of "disciplinary" significance. They were either ramifications of the Jesuits, or have come under their control, serving as political instruments rather than renovating forces in a religious development. Catholicism has become "Jesuitism." In modern times the Church has created no great

* The heretical movements of the Middle Ages based on the social conflicts created by the rise of the towns were simultaneous reactions to the politics of the Church and to Scholastic philosophy. They were often hemmed in by the popular religious movements and taken back into the Church through the formation of Mendicant Orders and a new religious unity.

religious orders, but rather a political party, Christian Democracy.*

The position of Marxism is the opposite of the Catholic position. Marxism does not try to keep the people within the confines of their primitive philosophies. It leads them from common sense to a higher view of life. Marxism insists on the necessity of contact between the intellectuals and the masses of people not in order to limit scientific activity and achieve unity at a low level, but rather to build an intellectual bloc which will make politically possible the higher intellectual development of the people.

Ed. Note: After the revelations and upheavals in the Socialist world, the ideas of Gramsci on the contrast between Catholicism and Marxism seem naïve. Many observers would argue that there is no essential difference between the two, that both impose an iron discipline on intellectuals and both stifle the spirit of inquiry and the spirit of artistic and scientific freedom. Many progressives in America have accepted this view and are profoundly disoriented. Many ask whether socialism is not by its nature totalitarian.

Yet a closer analysis of Soviet development, including its dark and somber areas, shows a great correspondence to Gramsci's analysis. The enormous educational achievements of the U.S.S.R. designed to lift an entire population from the cultural level of the Middle Ages to that of the Twentieth Century are beyond dispute. The Soviet Union today has one of the finest public educational systems in the world in terms of coverage of population, lack of discrimination, educational standards, social status of teachers, and so on. Their scientists are among the best and Professor E. Teller, the "father" of the H-Bomb, after a recent visit to the U.S.S.R., stated flatly that in a decade their science would lead the world. Fortune *Magazine of February, 1957, acknowledging*

* Wickham Steed in his *Memoirs* tells the anecdote of a Cardinal explaining to a pro-Catholic English Protestant that the miracles of Saint Gennaro (patron saint of Naples) are articles of faith for the Neapolitan populace but not for Catholic intellectuals. Whereupon the Protestant asks, "But aren't *you* all Catholic Christians?" And the Cardinal answers, "I am a 'prelate' which means an office-holder, a 'politician' of the Church of Rome."

the world leadership of Soviet scientists in many areas, attributed it to the freedom of Soviet scientists in contrast to other areas of Soviet life so that the brilliant students gravitated to science. All this in forty years. Whereas after 2,000 years the Catholic Church is still one of the most powerful world-wide forces for intellectual backwardness of the people. Where the Church is strongest (Spain, prewar Hungary and Poland, Slovakia, etc.) there education of the people is at its lowest.

Isn't it possible that the very education of the Soviet population, transforming the country psychologically as the industrialization has transformed it physically, is one of the root causes of the present evolution of Soviet politics, at home and abroad?

The average man acts practically to achieve certain ends. To the extent that he is successful he has to some degree shaped the world around him—his activity has changed the world. But his success is in direct relation to his understanding of himself and the world around him. Vice versa, his activity is a form of knowledge of the world around him in so far as he is changing it. Yet the average man has no theoretical consciousness of this. In fact, his theoretical consciousness may be, and often is, in contradiction to his actions; one may almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or, perhaps, one contradictory consciousness). One consciousness is *implicit* in his actions which are uniting him with all his coworkers in the practical transformation of reality; the other is the *explicit* consciousness, the verbal one, which he has inherited from the past and which he has uncritically accepted. This "verbal" consciousness is also responsible for actions. It is tied to a given social group which influences his ethical behavior, the direction and exercise of his will. The existence of these two consciousnesses, this contradiction, may reach a point that it prevents any action, any decision, any choice. It may create a state of moral and political passivity.

Critical understanding of one's own self takes place through a

struggle of political "hegemonies,"* first in the field of ethics, then in politics, to reach a higher understanding of reality. The consciousness of belonging to a given hegemony is the first phase of a further self-consciousness in which theory and practice are finally united. Therefore even the unity of theory and practice is not a mechanical given fact but a historical process. That is why we have stressed that in political development the concept of hegemony is a great philosophical step forward for mankind. This concept includes and presupposes an intellectual unity and an ethic which conforms to reality.

Ed. Note: The moral and political passivity of many progressives in the United States and elsewhere illustrates this discussion, but with a reverse twist. That is, one can argue that, among progressives, Marxism is the "verbal" consciousness while the consciousness shown in acts is idealist, pragmatist, or what have you. As a matter of fact, in many cases both consciousnesses are becoming explicit. Ruling class concepts are striving against Marxist concepts in the minds of men. A good illustration is the discussion over ends and means. The ruling class loves to ask, "Does the end justify the means?" and all they are up to is to stop opponents before they get well started. They set up absolutes like the Ten Commandments and then try to prevent unions by calling the leadership atheists, or break up a strike because someone is killed or prevent socialism by saying that the means used are evil, inhuman, etc. Meanwhile throughout history the ruling classes have merrily gone on with wars, killing, force, violence, breaking every rule they ever made, all quite "legally" and "officially."

Actually the dispute over ends and means is artificial. Only the end can justify the means. Hegel says, what else can justify the means except the end? The end to be achieved is subject to ethical judgments; is it right or wrong, good or evil? But the only valid question about means is: are they causally

* By "hegemony" Gramsci means moral leadership of a social group through the sum total of its concepts, actions, and methods. He considers that Lenin sharpened and developed this concept and gave it a concrete expression in Bolshevism.

correct, are they efficient, will they bring about the desired result; are they necessary and sufficient?

In the more recent developments of Marxism we are still at the initial phase of deepening the concept of the unity of theory and practice. Remnants of mechanism remain in ideas such as theory as a "complement" to practice or as "ancillary" to practice. This concept too can be looked at as an aspect of the political problem of intellectuals.

The awareness of the unity of theory and practice is a historical development of critical self-consciousness. This entails the development of a "leading group" of intellectuals within the mass of people. The mass of people cannot become independent and autonomous without organizing itself, and organization is impossible without organizers and directors, without intellectuals. A group within the mass must develop the theoretical concepts necessary for development including most particularly the unity of theory and practice.

This process of developing a group of intellectuals is long and difficult. It is full of contradictions, of advances and retreats, of people coming together, disbanding, regrouping, and so on. In this process the loyalty of the mass of people to its own intellectuals is sorely tested. And it should be noted that loyalty and discipline are the form of the agreement of the people with the intellectuals, and the form of their collaboration in the developing historical process.

"Leadership" develops within the people dialectically. As the group of leaders develops intellectually quantitatively and qualitatively it is inextricably connected with the people. Every leap forward of the intellectuals toward a widening of their horizons and toward greater complexities has a relation to the cultural level of the people which also rises, via individuals and small groupings, toward the level of the intellectuals.

Again and again, however, in this process, the intellectuals lose contact with the people. There is a lag, a separation, and therefore the impression arises that theory is complementary to practice,

that it is subordinate. At such times, to insist on the primacy of "practice" is to show that the historical development is in a primitive phase where the production relations of a society are still changing and an adequate superstructure has not fully developed.

Ed. Note: The discussion above may help to understand one of the factors in the upheaval in Hungary, the break between the leadership and the people. Production relations were *changing rapidly; the superstructure was* not *adequate. To say that economic problems were serious in Hungary is to beg the question: the proper contact between leadership and people would have prevented the upheaval, as Poland shows. It was the hypocrisy and arrogance of the leadership which in part fueled the flames. This discussion illuminates another observation of Gramsci quoted in the introduction: "in the phase of state power all the superstructure must be developed, or the state itself may disintegrate."*

In further discussing the unity of theory and practice we should take a look at political parties in the modern world. Political parties develop and propagate the ethics and politics corresponding to specific world views. Their role in this context is of the greatest significance. They function almost as "experimental laboratories" in the historical testing of world views. Individuals adhere to these parties so that the parties act as screening devices through which the mass of the people is divided among various world views. This screening takes place both in the field of practical activities and in the field of theory, separately and in various mixtures. The more the specific world view is vitally and radically new, the more it is antagonistic to older world views the tighter is the relationship between theory and practice as the screening takes place. It may be said that political parties are the developers of new ideologies, that they are the crucibles wherein takes place the unity of theory and practice on a historical scale.

It should now be easy to understand why a working class party should be formed through the adherence of individuals and not through the unions. [Gramsci has in mind the British Labor

Party, which is composed in both ways.—*Ed. Note*] A party must be composed of individuals who know what they are doing and why if it is to direct organically the entire mass of the people. Such direction cannot take place by old methods but by innovations in organizations and procedures, and innovations cannot become the property of the people except through the teaching of a leadership group. These leaders at all levels must have some consciousness of the world view implicit in the people's practical activity, must have some coherence in their thinking and a will which is clear and committed.

Discussions of the concept of the unity of theory and practice still suffer from the over-all vulgarization of Marxism. One can still sense deterministic, fatalistic, mechanistic elements which have created an "ideological aroma" around Marxism, making it a kind of religion. We can see how this came about, and is even historically justifiable, given the "subordinate" character of the social groups which accepted Marxism.

When one does not have initiative in a struggle the struggle becomes identified with a series of defeats. In such a situation mechanical determinism becomes a formidable morale builder, making for cohesion, patience, and obstinate perseverance. The rationale is well known: "I have been defeated for the moment but the logic of things works for me in the long run, etc." We can understand and sympathize but the fact is that in such a view the act of will becomes a travesty, becomes an act of faith in the assured rationality of history. In form, it is nothing but an empirical and primitive type of passionate fatalism which seems simply a substitute for similar concepts in religions like predestination, Providence, etc. It should, however, be observed that even under such conditions the will is acting directly on the "logic of things," but it is doing so implicitly, almost ashamed of itself, so that the consciousness is veiled, contradictory, lacks critical impact, etc.

But when the "subordinate" group becomes the ruling group responsible for the economic activity of the people, then mechanistic Marxism becomes at some point a clear and present danger.

Ed. Note: This is perhaps the most prophetic insight of Gramsci, as the events of Poland and Hungary have shown. This sentence written thirty years ago has the immediacy of current events. Wrong ideas always do harm, but wrong ideas plus power can be catastrophic.

When such a group rules it is imperative that it change its mode of thinking because life itself has changed. The "logic of things" is no longer absolute; it has limits and restrictions. Why? Because it can be acted upon. If the "subordinate group" felt itself yesterday a plaything of outside forces, this ruling group today has power and initiative; yesterday it was irresponsible, today it is active and independent. But even this formulation is wrong, for is it ever true that even yesterday it was an irresponsible plaything? Certainly not. Fatalism is the weakling's garb for a real will. Hence we must always show the futility of a mechanistic determinism. We can understand it as a naïve philosophy for the average man, and, as philosophy, an element of strength for him. But if it is accepted by intellectuals as a coherent and critical philosophy, then it leads to passivity and a kind of imbecilic self-sufficiency, whether the intellectuals are subordinate or ruling. We must always remember that within the people, however downtrodden, there are elements which are responsible and developing and that their philosophy anticipates the future not only theoretically but in their daily activities.

The proof that a mechanistic conception is the philosophy of subordinate groups is shown by an analysis of Christianity. Under given historical conditions Christianity is a "necessity" for the masses, giving them a means of expression, a rationality of the world, a framework for practical activity. This function seems well phrased in an article in *Civilta Cattolica* ("Pagan Individualism and Christian Individualism," March 5, 1932):

> "Faith in a secure future, in the immortality of the soul destined to Paradise, the certainty of being able to reach eternal happiness, all this was the mainspring of a drive for internal perfection and spiritual development. True Christian individualism found here the impulse to its victories. All the strength

of a Christian was gathered around this noble end. Freed from speculative waverings which disarm the soul with doubts, and guided by immortal principles, man felt his hopes resurgent. Certain that in his struggle against evil a greater power sustained him, man surpassed himself and won the world."

Of course, this refers to primitive Christianity, not the jesuitized religion which has become a narcotic for the people.

Even clearer and more significant for our argument is the position of Calvinism with its iron concept of predestination and grace which determined a vast expansion of individual initiative.

* * *

We move on to another aspect of philosophy: how and why are new world views widely propagated and popularized. This process of propagation of the new is at the same time a substitution for, and often a combination with, the old. Various factors feed this process: the form in which the new world view is taught, the recognized authority of the teacher and of the thinkers who support him, the kind of people who belong to the organization which supports the new world view (even those who joined for other motives than the acceptance of the new world view). All these elements vary according to the social group and its cultural level.

But the research in which we are most interested is the research on these factors within the broad population. The people change concepts with great difficulty, and never by accepting new concepts in their "pure" form, so to speak, but always in some eclectic combination. Rationality, logical coherence, completeness of argumentation, all these are important but far from decisive in dealing with the people. Of course, it can be decisive at a secondary level, if the person involved is already in a state of intellectual crisis, has lost faith in the old, and is wavering between the old and the new.

Ed. Note: A pregnant analysis that seems tailor-made for American progressives who do have a tendency to assume that "rationality, logical coherence, completeness of argumenta-

tion" are decisive in propaganda. Lincoln and Roosevelt knew better. So did a Lenin, or, in our own back yard, a Marcantonio. They knew, and consciously too, that in dealing with large groups of people the new ideas they presented would be absorbed unevenly, in highly personal mixtures with other ideas and interpretations. They gave here and there, seeking the largest areas of agreement, and so were accused of opportunism and compromises. Yet they held to their course, successful political leaders. The Eisenhowers and the Nixons have no such problems, for they are not introducing new ideas. They manipulate the stereotypes of old, embedded in the popular mind, and can thus find easily wide areas of agreement with the people.

The same may be said of the authority of thinkers and scientists, which is generally very great among the people. But every world view can cite thinkers on its behalf, so that their authority is divided. Moreover, every thinker has a tendency to refine and qualify, to cast doubt on what he has said by his way of saying it.

We may conclude therefore that the propagation of new concepts takes place for political, ultimately social, reasons, and that logic, authority, and organization are very important only as soon as a general reorientation has taken place in the individual or in the group. From this we conclude that in the people at this stage, philosophy can be lived only as a faith.

After all, consider for a moment the intellectual position of the average person. He has been shaped by opinions, convictions, some criteria of discrimination, and certain rules of behavior. Any ideological opponent who is intellectually superior can argue his position better than our man can, defeat him logically, and so on. What should our man do, change his convictions because he can't win the given discussion? But then he might be changing his opinions once a day if he should happen to meet superior opponents. This he cannot do, and he won't do. Therefore what is the basis of the philosophy of the average man, and especially of his ethics? Undoubtedly the most important element is not reason but faith. But faith in whom and in what? Faith in that social group to which he belongs and who think as vaguely as he

does; the average man feels that so many people cannot be as wrong as his argumentative opponent would like him to believe. It is true, thinks our man, he himself is not capable of winning the argument, but there is someone in his own group who can, and in fact our man remembers hearing such a coherent impressive argument for his beliefs that he was, and has remained, convinced. He may not remember the argument concretely, and he couldn't repeat it, but he knows it was true because he heard it and was convinced. The permanent reason for the permanence of a conviction is to have been strikingly convinced once.

Ed. Note: This fine analysis of how new ideas spread out among the people is of great relevance to the American progressive movement. After a decade of reaction many progressives are disheartened. The power of propaganda of the ruling class seems so enormous (newpapers, comic books, radio, TV, movies, large sectors and elements of schools and colleges) that its sheer weight is sometimes paralyzing. But its power is deceptive. Years and years of falsification are swept aside at one stroke when a single experience teaches a person the truth, particularly (though not necessarily) if someone is at hand to focus the meaning of that experience for the person concerned.

The truth has to break through but once; the lies of the ruling class have to be constantly reiterated. Again and again, a bitterly anti-union man becomes pro-union in a struggle, and generally speaking this change is definitive; once a union man, always a union man.

The ruling class in their propaganda are like the Red Queen: they must run and run to stay in the same place. Nay, they are constantly losing ground. Since the birth of Marxism, over a hundred years ago, Marxism has steadily spread among the people from generation to generation, in every country and corner of the world including the West. It is a thought to keep in mind in bad times.

We conclude that there is an extreme instability in the new convictions of the people, particularly if these convictions contradict the orthodox convictions that conform to the interests of the

dominant class. We see this, thinking over the vicissitudes of religions and of churches. A given church maintains its community of faithful to the extent that it maintains its basic faith in an organized manner, indefatigably reiterating its apologetics, fighting at any and all times, using always the same arguments, and maintaining a hierarchy of intellectuals who dignify the faith with at least a semblance of thought. Every time the relations between the church and the faithful have been violently interrupted for political reasons, as in the French Revolution, the losses to the church have been incalculable. If the difficulties in carrying out habitual rituals had continued, it is conceivable that the losses would have been decisive and that a new religion would have arisen. In a sense this did happen in France with a mixture of new ideas and the ancient Catholicism.

We deduce certain musts for any cultural movement which seeks to supplant old world views:

1. To repeat unceasingly and tirelessly one's own arguments, though, of course, varying the literary form. Repetition is the most efficient didactic method of working on the popular mind.

2. To work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever greater strata of the population. This entails developing groups of intellectuals of a new type, who rise directly from the people yet remain in contact with them, forming as it were the "ribs" corseting the mass.

If this second condition is fulfilled, the "ideological panorama" of an epoch is truly changed. The development of groups of individuals entails an organization within themselves, a hierarchy of intellectual competence and authority. This hierarchy may culminate in a great individual philosopher if he can relive concretely the ideological needs of the people, if he understands that this ideology cannot have that elegance and subtlety appropriate to an individual brain, and must therefore develop formally a collective doctrine suitable to the ways of thinking of a collective man.

It should be quite apparent that a basic conceptual change in the people cannot take place "arbitrarily" around any ideology

whatever as a consequence of the will of a strong personality or of a group who just wants to do it because of the fanaticism of its own convictions. The adherence or nonadherence of the people to an ideology is precisely the test which reveals the reality of a new concept, its rationality and its historical validity. "Arbitrary" systems may reach a degree of popularity because of favorable circumstances, but they are invariably eliminated in this historical competition. Concepts and systems which correspond to the complex necessities of an organic historical period always prevail in the end, even though they may have to go through intermediate phases during which their acceptance takes place in heterogeneous combinations and formulations.

The unfolding of the movement whereby a new world view is accepted by the masses presents many problems. The fundamental one which we have mentioned is the relationship between the intellectuals and the people. More specifically, the problem lies in the function of the higher intellectual groups. On one hand their own intellectual development must be safeguarded; on the other hand they must bring creative support to the lower intellectual groups and the masses of people, bearing in mind their capacities for discussion and development of new concepts. It is a question basically of setting the limits of freedom of discussion and propaganda, a freedom which must be understood not in the context of police methods, but in the context of self-discipline and self-control which the leadership places upon itself.

Ed. Note: Here we come to the great problem which is agitating all the socialist countries of the world, a problem which life itself poses and not this or that bureaucracy, as many people think. The character of a bureaucracy is primarily the result and not the cause of the way this problem is resolved, though, of course, one affects the other.

We are speaking, in effect, of laying down the "line" in culture and politics. Let us look at the problem this way: who will determine the "rights of science" and the limits of scientific research?

In fact, can these rights and these limits be determined at all? I think not. It seems to me that of necessity the search for new truths, and for clearer, more coherent formulations of these truths must be left to the free initiative of the individual scientists—even if scientists continually re-examine those very premises which seem most essential, fundamental, and settled once and for all.

Ed. Note: Gramsci, the Marxist philosopher in the great Marxist tradition, unequivocally asserts the necessity—necessity, not desirability—of free scientific inquiry. The scientist himself must be the judge of his own freedom. When Gramsci speaks of science he includes Marxism. His last sentence serves both to rivet his philosophic position and to hint that this creates problems for the statesman. Since Gramsci was an active political leader, he is fully aware of these problems. Therefore, having spoken as a philosopher, he continues the analysis as a political leader.

Of course, it is not too difficult to clarify and expose those "scientific initiatives" which have ulterior motives and are not the result of disinterested scientific inquiry. In addition, while the thought is free, it is not impossible to consider that the results do not have to be publicized. Individual initiatives may be disciplined by passing through the sieve of academies, cultural institutes of various kinds, and so on. Only after such examination can they become public.

Ed. Note: This is not a jesuitical argument, taking back with the left hand what he gave with the right. Gramsci is wrestling with a problem which is insoluble in principle at our level of civilization, the conflict between innovation and stability; the conflict between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group; the conflict between the minority and the majority in a society. The role of the political leader and of political science is to reconcile, make things viable. Politics is the art of the possible. Note the word art, not science; the individual plays an important role. This is what Gramsci is doing.

We would offer the so-called American Dilemma as an example, the problem of race prejudice in the South. It is insoluble under conditions of capitalism. It can be ameliorated by a combination of laws, force, education, the pressure of social approval and disapproval of the rest of the country. Negroes will go to school, Negroes will get the vote, but racial prejudice will not disappear. It will take a considerable period of socialism until racism will completely disappear, that is, be completely eliminated from the consciousness of human beings just as totemism has disappeared from the consciousness of modern man. In our stage of society in the United States the best a functioning political leader can do is to remove the legal disabilities against Negroes and stop the use of force and violence against Negroes in the South.

As an aid to studying the relationships between philosophy and the people, it would be of great interest to examine concretely, for a single country, the cultural organization which keeps the ideological world in motion. It would be useful to examine its practical day-to-day operations. It would be useful also to study the numerical relations between the professional personnel engaged in cultural work and the population of a given country, together with an estimate of the nonprofessional people so engaged. Schools at all levels and churches are the two major cultural organizations in any country in view of the number of people working in them. Newspapers, magazines, libraries are next as well as private scholastic institutions. Certain professions include in their specialized activities a substantial amount of cultural work, for example, doctors, army officers, judges.

It must be noted, however, that in all countries, to a varying degree, there is a gap between the masses of people and the intellectual groups, even those closer to the people in great numbers, like priests and teachers. This is so because, no matter what the rulers say, the state does not have a coherent unifying role, so that various intellectual groups are disjointed from level to level of the population. The universities, for example, except in a very few countries, play no unifying role, so that often a single inde-

pendent thinker has more influence than the entire institution of universities.

Finally, a few words on the historical role of fatalism within Marxism. We should, I think, prepare a funeral elegy on the concept of fatalism, praising its usefulness in a certain historical period but burying it once for all—with full honors. Fatalism can be compared to the theories of grace and predestination at the beginnings of the modern world which finally culminated with the classical German philosophy and its concept of freedom as the recognition of necessity. The concept of fatalism was a popular substitute for the medieval cry "God will it," although even at this primitive level of causality it was a more modern and fruitful concept. It is possible that a new concept might be born in a different "formal" manner than the rough and uncouth form which the people shape. Nevertheless the historian with his perspectives can point out that the beginnings of a new world, always stony and bitter, are superior to the decline of a dying world and its swan songs.

Base and Superstructure

Economics and ideology. We must fight theoretically as primitive infantilism the attempt to explain every fluctuation of politics and ideology as an immediate reflection of some change in the economic base of the structure. This nonsense is sometimes even presented as an axiom of historical materialism. In practice we can fight this idea with the authentic testimony of Marx, whose political and historical works are always concrete. See particularly the *Eighteenth Brumaire, Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany, Civil War in France,* etc. An analysis of these writings will help to see clearly Marxist historical methodology, by integrating, interpreting, and illuminating the various theoretical propositions scattered throughout all these volumes.

One can see how many warnings Marx introduces in his concrete researches, warnings which would have no place in his theoretical, generalized writings. Among these warnings we may list the following:

1. The difficulty in identifying at any given time the economic base of a society as if it were static. Politics is, of course, at any moment the reflection of unfolding tendencies in the economic base, tendencies, however, which may not come to fruition; nor can they be analyzed in process. The point is that any phase in the development of the economic base can be studied *concretely only after its development has been finished.* During the process of development the phase can be studied only through hypothesis, by suppositions, and we must be clear that's what we are doing. [Italics added—*Ed.*]

2. It follows from this that any specific political act may have been an error on the part of the administrators of the ruling classes, an error which historical development rectifies through the parliamentary "crisis" in the governments of the ruling classes.

Mechanistic historical materialism does not consider the possibility of error, but assumes that every political act is determined by the economic base of society, that it is a reflection of some real change in the base. The concept of "error" is a complex one: it may be an individual error or it may be an indication of attempts at control by factions within the ruling class, attempts which may or may not fail.

3. We don't pay enough attention to the fact that many political actions are due to internal organizational necessities, the needs to maintain the coherence of a party, a group, a society. The history of the Catholic Church is full of examples. If every ideological struggle within the Church had to be explained by a change in the base of society, a student would go crazy. (I must say many political-economic "dime novels" have been written this way.) Most of the ideological arguments were related to organizational needs. For example, take the struggle between Rome and Byzantium on the derivation of the Holy Ghost. It would be ridiculous to seek in the economic base of Eastern Europe the reason for the assertion that the Holy Ghost derives only from the Father, and likewise in Western Europe for the assertion that the Holy Ghost derives from the Father *and* the Son. The existence and conflicts of the two Churches do depend on their economic base and on their historical developments, but the specific positions on the Holy Ghost were set forth as an area of differentiation by the two Churches to strengthen their internal cohesion. They could have changed positions and it wouldn't have mattered so long as the conflict was maintained. This is the real historical problem to be analyzed and not the casuistry on each side.

What Is Man

What is man? This is the first and principal question in philosophy. If we think about it we see that when we ask what man *is,* we are really asking what man can *become,* that is, can man dominate his own destiny, can he "remake himself," can he create his own life? We answer, therefore, that man is a process, the process of his activities.

The very question, what is man, is not an abstract question. It arises from our introspection, our thinking about ourselves and about others. We want to know what we are to know what we can be; we want to know within what limits, if any, we can "forge ourselves." And we want to know this "today," that is, in the conditions of contemporary life.

The content of this question is already shaped by given ways of considering life and mankind. The most important of these existing ways is religion, and particularly one religion, Catholicism. In reality when we ask, what is man, how important is his will, etc., we are asking: "Is Catholicism a correct view of life and man? Are we in error or are we right in being Catholics, in making this religion our way of life?" Now everyone has a vague intuition that he is making a mistake in adhering to Catholicism as a way of life and, in fact, no one does it, although he still calls himself Catholic. A real integrated Catholic, one who would apply Catholic rules to every act of his life, would be a monster. When one thinks about it, this is the most severe criticism that could be made of Catholicism, and the most inescapable.

Ed. Note: These last two sentences have been given life in the novel The Ecstasy of Owen Muir *by Ring Lardner Jr. Owen Muir is a convert to Catholicism who seeks to apply the rules of his religion to every act of his life. The resulting contradictions not only give great scope to Mr. Lardner's*

superlative satire, but they show inexorably that rigorous adherance to Catholic dogma does turn a man into a "monster."

Since Italy is a Catholic country, Gramsci's knowledge and awareness of Catholicism are part of his life both theoretically and as a political leader. But much of what he has to say is applicable to the United States. This country is the major financial and political stronghold of the Catholic International, and the Vatican is a much underestimated factor in world politics. Domestically, too, the American Catholic hierarchy, in its philosophy, organizational outlook, educational powers, and consciousness in daily activities, is one of the most important components of reaction at every level, municipal, state, and federal. American Marxists have shied away from the problem of Catholicism both in theoretical and in practical activities, primarily because of the fallacious view that it would be divisive to pay too much attention to it. The Ecstasy of Owen Muir *was criticized for this reason.*

Admittedly the problem is difficult, but it is not insoluble. It calls for political skill and knowledge; concrete examination and concrete solutions. But one thing is certain: nothing is ever gained by leaving the field to the enemy.

In rebuttal, Catholics will argue that no other world view is faithfully followed in action. This argument is true, but all it shows is that historically there is no other way of thinking which applies equally to all men. That is all this argument proves and there is nothing in it favorable to Catholicism. The contrary is the case when one considers that this way of life has been organized for centuries with the aim of having men conform to its dogma and that no other religion has operated with the continuity, the means, the centralization, the power, and the systematic exposition of its dogma as the Catholic Church.

What makes for dissatisfaction in Catholicism from a "philosophical" point of view is that it places evil within man as an individual. [Adam and original sin—*Ed.*] Man, therefore, is a well defined, and limited, individual. All religions hitherto existing, in one way or another, have basically the same position as

Catholicism. All conceive man as an individual prisoner of himself, limited by his own individuality, his mind and soul so limited. *It is this concept of man which must be changed.* [Italics added—*Ed.*] We must conceive of individual man as a series of active relationships, a process, in which his individuality is not the only element to be considered, though it is of the greatest importance.

Humanity, mankind, as reflected in each individual is composed of three elements: (1) the individual, (2) other individuals, (3) nature. Elements two and three are not as simple as they seem. The individual's relations with other men are not merely based on juxtaposition, just being next to one another. These relations are organic, they take place only to the extent that the individual is part of social organisms, from the simplest to the most complex. Likewise man does not enter into relationships with nature by the mere fact that he is himself a part of nature. He deals with nature actively and organically, through his labor and his technics. But there is more. These relationships are not mechanical. They are active, conscious, and self-conscious to the degree that the individual man is aware of them.

It may be said therefore that each person changes himself to the extent that he changes and modifies the entire complex of relationships which center in him. From this aspect the real philosopher is the political person, the active man who modifies his environment, the sum total of his relations. If one's own individuality is the totality of his relationships, the consciousness of self, the personality, is the awareness of the totality. To change one's own personality means to change this totality.

Ed. Note: This most penetrating analysis of personality illuminates the proposition that the Marxist "know thyself" is a social, active concept rather than a static, contemplative phenomenon of individual introspection. As mentioned elsewhere in these notes, the analysis is extremely relevant to the problem of self-criticism and concretely, in the United States as elsewhere, to the problem of raising the caliber of Marxist thought.

These relationships, as we have said, are not simple. Some are necessary, others voluntary. Furthermore, to be conscious of them is already to change them in some degree. Necessary relationships change in importance, appearance, and significance to the extent that their necessity is recognized. In this sense, knowledge is power. But the problem is further complicated. It isn't enough to understand the totality of relationships at a given moment, as a given system, but we must understand it genetically, understand how the system and the relationships were formed. Every individual is not only the synthesis of contemporary relationships, he is also a summary of the entire past. It may be objected that what each individual can change is very little. This is true up to a point. But since each person can join others who want the same changes he can multiply himself an imposing number of times. If the change desired is "rational," historically possible, then even a very radical change can be achieved, one that did not seem possible at first sight.

The social groups which an individual can join are extremely numerous, much more so than one would think. Through these groups and groupings an individual becomes part of the human species. Likewise numerous are the ways in which an individual deals with nature, because by technics we must understand not only scientific ideas applied industrially, but also such "mental" instruments as philosophic knowledge.

Man cannot be conceived of except as living in a society. This is a commonplace, but all the consequences have not been studied. . . . We must develop a doctrine wherein all the relationships are active and in motion, keeping clearly in mind that the control center of this activity is the individual self-consciousness of the individual human being who knows, desires, admires, creates only to the extent that he knows, desires, admires, creates, etc. Provided that the individual is always conceived not as isolated, but one full of the possibilities offered to him by other men and by nature.

Marxism and Modern Culture

Marxism has been a nodal point in the development of modern culture. In varying degrees it has determined or influenced many philosophic currents, but this significant fact has been generally ignored by "orthodox" students of Marxism. Probably the reason for this neglect is that the most significant philosophic amalgams have been those between Marxism and idealism, amalgams which struck orthodox students as reactionary or downright fraudulent.

Hitherto, Marxism has been subjected to a double revisionism. On one hand some of its elements were incorporated, implicitly or explicitly, into certain idealist positions—Croce, Gentile, Sorel, Bergson and pragmatism. One current even went back to Kant, as for example the work of Professor Adler of Vienna and in Italy Professors Poggi and Baratono.

On the other hand, the "orthodox" students, narrowly understanding Marxism as a "simple" interpretation of history, tried to strengthen it by identifying it with a philosophy which was basically a traditional materialism. In general, blends of Marxism with idealism have been attempted by what we may term "pure" intellectuals, whereas the "orthodox" view was developed by more active intellectuals whose activities put them in touch, to some degree, with sections of the people. This contact, it should be added, did not prevent many of these intellectuals from making somersaults of considerable political, and historical, importance.

The distinction between "pure" and "active" intellectuals has considerable significance. The first tended to be leaders in their respective countries, architects of the ideologies of the ruling classes. They used elements of Marxism to strengthen their ideologies, particularly to tone down the speculative elements in their philosophies. Their purpose was to forge new and better weapons for their own social class.

The "active" intellectuals, on the other hand, were in many cases fighting for progress and trying to combat the most reactionary ideology among the people, namely, transcendental religion. They tried to utilize in their struggle an opposing ideology already widespread among the people, namely, crude materialism. Such materialism is a large component of common sense, as well as of superstition and witchcraft which are fostered by religion among the ignorant. As a result, the tendency of orthodox Marxism was to fall into the trap of a vulgar materialism.

Ed. Note: The most important of these ruling class philosophers who have used Marxist concepts to develop better ideological weapons has undoubtedly been Bergson with his pragmatism, which in America was spread by Professors Royce and James. Gramsci, as he mentions above and reiterates below, considers pragmatism the philosophy most in debt to Marxism. We are in no position to evaluate this judgment of Gramsci; we would venture that pragmatism's emphasis on action as a test of truth seems to owe a good deal to the Marxist emphasis on practice (the unity of theory and practice). However, as Gramsci says, this subject requires much study.

What is incontestable, however, is the importance of such study, for pragmatism has been and is the major ideological weapon of the American ruling classes and its penetration in Marxist ranks has been the greater because the less realized.

Against all these approaches, Antonio Labriola affirms (though not always consistently) the proposition that Marxism is an independent and original philosophy, self-contained, autonomous, and capable of further development. Entirely from its own inner resources, Marxism can develop further not only in the interpretation of history but as a world philosophy of the widest application.* We must follow Labriola's path.

* "*Labriola, Antonio,* 1843–1904. Italian socialist philosopher. Professor at the University of Rome from 1874 until his death. Was under the influence of Hegel, Hebart, and Marx respectively. . . . As the first professor of philosophy in a European university to expound historical materialism, Labriola raised the prestige of revolutionary socialism in intellectual circles."—*Encyclopedia of Social Sciences.*

Ed. Note: This proposition of Antonio Labriola is fundamental to Gramsci's thought. Gramsci argues that since Marx and Engels there has been a deterioration in the study and application of Marxism primarily because Marxists have not fully realized the strength of Marxism as a completely autonomous philosophy. Marxism will develop not by marrying Marx to Freud, to Jesus, to logical positivism, or to what have you, but by serious, sober study of reality in the light of dialectical materialism. The need, to put it crudely, is to take Marxism seriously, rather than dogmatically. Dogmatism is the opposite of taking Marxism seriously. It uses Marxism not as a theory and a tool to examine reality, but rather as a source of authoritarian quotations to support opportunistic ideas.

It is illuminating to find out why Marxism has been used by both idealists and materialists. How could such contrasting philosophies find elements in Marxism which were of value to them? Research on this question requires analytical finesse and intellectual sobriety. Studies must be made with great critical caution to identify those concepts which Marxism has "given" to traditional philosophies, thereby rejuvenating them for a time. Such studies, in a sense, would amount to a history of modern culture since Marx and Engels.

It is not difficult to trace explicit borrowings of Marxist concepts. A classic example is Croce's reduction of Marxism to a set of empirical rules for historical research. Croce's concept has penetrated even into Catholic circles (see the work of Monsignor Olgiati) and has helped to create that Italian school of history known as the economic-juridical school.

More difficult, however, is the research on the unavowed, implicit borrowings from Marxism, due to the fact that this philosophy, because it was a nodal point in modern culture, has become part of a general climate of opinion and has modified modes of old thought in subtle and hidden ways. In Sorel and his development, for example, one can find many clues to hidden Marxist concepts. The same is true of Croce. The most important example,

however, is that of Bergson and pragmatism. A careful study would show, we believe, that many of the concepts of pragmatism would be inconceivable without the historical link of Marxism.

Another facet of this question of Marxist influence is seen in political science. Just as the Jesuits fight Machiavelli theoretically and at the same time are his best disciples, so opponents of Marxism reject it bitterly in words while in practice they accept Marx's political analysis. For example, when Mario Missiroli was Rome correspondent of the *Stampa* he wrote in a column (around 1925) that the more intelligent industrialists believed in their heart of hearts that *Das Kapital* had some deep insights into their world and were using these insights for their own purposes. This, of course, is not surprising. If Marx has in fact analyzed capitalism correctly this simply means that he has systematized coherently what the historical agents of capitalism feel vaguely and intuitively. After Marxism, these agents become more clearly aware of their role, more self-conscious.

Ed. Note: What was surmised thirty years ago is unquestionably true today. Secretary of Defense Forrestal, of unhappy fame, hired a professor to make him a study of Marxism. The European ruling classes have for years studied Marxism in their great universities, often under well-known Marxists as teachers. In part this is due to the fact that as the U.S.S.R. grew in power ruling groups wished to understand their enemy, yet in part it is also the result of the value of Marxism as a philosophy and its pressure on all areas of knowledge.

This phenomenon should give pause to many American progressives who are ready to jettison Marxism because it is "out of date," particularly those who do so under a rationalization of ascertaining "what is still valid today." While there is no question whatever that Marxism must always be concretely applied to any historical period or situation, and in that sense its "validity" is constantly tested, the premise of this activity is the knowledge of Marxist thought. Serious, sustained Marxist study in a context of high critical standards, by people who are committed and are active in the world

around them, is a minimum prerequisite for a revitalized Marxist movement in America.

Let us return to our earlier and more interesting discussion: why did orthodox students combine Marxism with traditional materialism rather than with other philosophies equally current? Relevant to this question is the essay of Rosa Luxemburg, *Stillstand und Fortschritt im Marxismus* (*Vorwarts,* March 14, 1903), which notes that various elements of Marxism have been developed in varying degrees but always according to the requirements of practical work. She argues that Marx and Engels had been so in advance of their generation, and the following one, that their ideological weapons could not be used because few were able to use them. With the passing of time, these weapons are now useful and should be refurbished. To some extent this explanation is logically circular, nevertheless it has an element of truth which should be developed. As we have previously mentioned, Marxism allied itself with other philosophic tendencies in order to fight the remnants of pre-capitalist ideologies within the masses of the people, religion in particular.

Marxism had two tasks: on one hand to combat modern ideologies in their subtlest forms in order to build its own group of intellectuals, and on the other hand to educate the masses of people whose culture was practically medieval. Given the character of Marxism, this second task seemed fundamental. As a result it absorbed all the energies of Marxism, quantitatively and qualitatively. For propaganda purposes Marxism was combined with a form of culture somewhat superior to the popular average (which, of course, was extremely low) and by so doing became absolutely inadequate to combat the ideologies of the cultured classes. All this despite the fact that Marxism was born to supersede classic German philosophy, the highest cultural manifestation of the period.

Ed. Note: Rosa Luxemburg's idea is a thought-provoking one and so is Gramsci's, but it should be remembered that Gramsci is speaking from a background of Catholicism. In

the United States, while religion is a powerful ideological weapon of reaction, it is not nearly so powerful as in Catholic countries, and there is less cause for Marxism to be vulgarized.

We should study whether the kind of cultural "deployment" we have outlined is not a historical necessity and whether in past history we couldn't find similarities in other cultural developments. To me the classic example in recent times has been the Renaissance in Italy and the Reformation in Protestant countries. Croce has something to contribute on this. On page 11, *History of the Baroque in Italy*, he writes:

"The movement of the Renaissance remained aristocratic, within elite circles. Even in Italy, which was its mother and nurse, the Renaissance never left the Court circles, never penetrated to the people, never became 'custom and prejudice,' a collective belief and faith. The Reformation, on the other hand, 'did have the efficacy of popularization but paid for it with a slowing up of its inner development,' that is, with the interrupted maturing of its vital germ."

On page 8 Croce writes,

"Luther, like the humanists, deplores sadness and praises happiness, condemns idleness and commends labor, yet at the same time shows such a hostility to literature and studies that Erasmus could say *ubicumque regnat lutheranismus ibi litterarum est interitus* [and wherever Lutheranism rules, there literature is buried]. Whether or not" continues Croce, "this aversion of Luther's was solely responsible, the fact is that German Protestantism for some two centuries was sterile of studies, critiques, or philosophies."

Ed. Note: Here in passing is an idea which has great value today, as large sections of the world's population are in transition from an old form of society to a new form. It takes a long period, sometimes measured in centuries, for new ways of thought to be assimilated by the people, and for new groups of intellectuals and artists to be formed so completely imbued with the new world view that art comes to fruition in presenting that world view.

The upholders of the old can sneer, always and easily, at the lack of culture in the new society and point with pride to

the existing culture, still being produced by the old. This, of course, is what has gone on for years in regard to Soviet literature, painting, architecture, and, to a lesser extent, Soviet music. But the socialist world won't take two centuries to come into fruition. Already, in science, the first breakthroughs are taking place, and large intellectual groups have been shaped.

Erasmus, who sneers at Lutheranism, was a liberal Catholic, and as much against the abuses of the Church as Martin Luther. He was a man of great stature in the Catholic world of his day, yet he and others like him "crooked the pregnant hinges of their knees" before the threat of excommunication and the fear of being burned at the stake. Valiant in their sneers, they were pliant in their actions.

Calvinism also, with its harsh conception of grace, did not favor free research. What happened to Calvinism, however, is that in the process of interpreting and adapting the concept of grace to that of a vocation (a calling) it ended up by forcefully promoting economic production and the accumulation of wealth.

The Lutheran Reformation and Calvinism gave rise to vast national-popular movements, in which the ideologies became widely diffused, and a superior culture was created only in much later periods. This immediate popular diffusion within the Protestant countries enabled them to withstand tenaciously and victoriously the crusade of Catholic armies. Thus was born the German nation, one of the more vigorous countries in modern Europe.

France was lacerated by religious wars which ended with a seeming victory for Catholicism. But in the 1700's there began to take place a great popular reform, with the Enlightenment, the spread of the spirit of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, a reform which preceded and accompanied the Revolution of 1789. This huge intellectual and moral reform of the French people was even more complete than that of Luther in Germany because it involved the great peasant masses, because it had a pronounced lay basis, and because it tried to substitute for religion the completely

nonreligious ideologies of nationalism and patriotism. Nevertheless, not even this reform resulted in an immediate flowering of high culture except in political science with the development of law.

Marxism can be conceived of as a modern popular reformation. . . . It presupposes our entire cultural past, Renaissance and Reformation, German philosophy and French revolution, Calvinism and English economy, lay liberalism and that sense of history which is the root of all modern conceptions of life. Marxism is the crowning achievement of this entire movement of intellectual and moral reform, dialectically realized in the contradiction between popular culture and high culture. Marxism corresponds to the nexus of the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution: it is a philosophy which is also a politics, and a politics which is also a philosophy.

Marxism is still going through its popular phase. To develop a group of independent intellectuals is not easy. It is a long process of actions and reactions, adhesions, desertions, dissolutions, new and many groupings and regroupings of a complex character. Marxism is the world view of an oppressed social class which has had no historical initiative. This class has grown continually larger without ever being able to pass a certain qualitative point: the lack of state power. The full organic development of an intellectual group can take place only through the real exercise of authority in a society. Yes, Marxism has itself become "prejudice" and "superstition," a popularized aspect of modern history, but Marxism has within itself the potential to surpass this popularization.

One final point at this time. In studying the history of cultural developments we must pay special attention to how cultures are organized and to the personnel of those cultures. In a volume of G. di Ruggiero, *Renaissance and Reformation,* we can see what was the attitude of most intellectuals of that time, headed by Erasmas. They bent before the persecutions and the burnings. It was the German people who carried on the Reformation. The desertion of the intellectuals before the enemy helps to explain

the sterility of the Reformation in the realm of advanced culture. Time was needed while a new group of intellectuals slowly emerged from the people, to carry on the work that culminated in classical German philosophy.

Something similar has happened so far to Marxism. The great intellectuals who became Marxists were not only very few but they were not tied to the people, they weren't of the people. Generally they were the products of intermediate classes to which they returned at times of great historical upheavals. Others who remained carried on a systematic revision of Marxism instead of furthering its autonomous development. We assert that Marxism, although a nodal point in world history, is nevertheless a new concept, original and independent. We thereby also assert the independence of a new culture now incubating which will develop with the development of social relations.

What exists from time to time is a varying combination of the old and the new, a momentary equilibrium of cultural relations corresponding to the equilibrium of social relations. Only after the creation of a new state does the cultural problem impinge on society in its entire complexity. Before the formation of a state Marxism has to be critical-polemical, and, while it should never be dogmatic, it cannot help a somewhat romantic stance. But it is a romanticism which consciously aspires to a serene classicism.

Marxism not only claims to explain and justify the past, it claims to explain and justify itself. It claims the greatest degree of historical perspective, utter freedom from any abstract ideology, the real conquest of the historical world, the opening of a new civilization.

Brief Notes

Scientific Discussion. We must not conceive of a scientific discussion as if it were a courtroom proceeding in which there are a defendant and a prosecutor who, by duty of his office, must show the defendant guilty. It is a premise of scientific discussion that the interest lies in the search for truth and the advancement of science. Therefore the most "advanced" thinker is he who understands that his adversary may express a truth which should be incorporated in his own ideas, even if in a minor way. To understand and evaluate realistically the position and reasons of one's adversary (*and sometimes the adversary is the entire thought of the past*) means to have freed oneself from the prison of ideologies, in the sense of blind fanaticism. One has then arrived at a critical frame of mind, the only fruitful stance in scientific research. (Italics added.—*Ed.*)

Marxism and English classical economy. In a certain sense, one may say that Marxism is Hegel plus Ricardo. Let us pose the problem: are the new methodological concepts introduced by Ricardo in the science of economics to be considered merely as tools, or do they have significance as philosophical innovations? Is the formal logical principle of the "law of tendency" which enables one to define scientifically the fundamental concepts of economics and of the "determined market" a discovery with epistemological value? Does not this law imply a new concept of "necessity," of freedom, etc.? It seems to me that Marxism has universalized the discoveries of Ricardo, which are tied to the birth of the science of economics. This is the point in the development of the bourgeoisie when it has become "concretely" a world class, that is, that a world market is formed sufficiently "dense," full of complex movements sufficiently numerous so that within them one may isolate laws of regularities, laws of tendencies. Naturally, these are not laws in a deterministic sense, but "historical" laws through which is observed the "determined market," an organically living environment.

Translation of Philosophic and Scientific Idioms

In 1921, while dealing with organizational questions, Lenin wrote or (said) something like this: We have not learned to "translate" our language into the various European languages.

Ed. Note: The use of the word language is misleading, for Lenin is not thinking primarily of the Russian tongue but of Soviet ways of thinking, even Soviet ways of acting, both deeply affected by the culture, history, and mores of past and existing Russia. Today it is accepted that Soviet development has been affected, for good and evil, by the Russian past.

To avoid misunderstanding, we are using the word "idiom" to indicate the cultural ensemble, the ways of thinking and acting in a country at a given time. By corollary the word "translate" means to transpose, to find correspondence or differentiations among the "idioms" of various countries, or of different periods in the same country. For example, can the French political revolution be compared with the German philosophical revolution?

There is a question whether the reciprocal translation of different scientific and philosophic idioms is a key element of all world views including Marxism, or whether Marxism alone can achieve such translation, while other world views can do so partially or not at all.

Translation of idioms into one another presupposes that a given period of civilization has "basically" an identical cultural expression, even if the idioms of the nations in that civilization are quite different, since they are each determined by a specific national development, culture, philosophic systems, etc. There is also a question whether a translation of idioms is possible between different phases of a civilization which have developed one from

the other and are thus, in a way, integrated. Finally, can any existing idiom be translated in the idiom of a past phase of a given civilization? This is particularly useful if the past phase is more comprehensible than the present one and can thus serve to illuminate it.

I believe that only in Marxism is such "translation" possible in an organic manner, whereas in other world views this translation is often only a schematic game.

Ed. Note: Many historians have used the past to illuminate the present, and vice versa. Many have found, or imposed, correspondences between various periods of greater or lesser validity. The most ambitious attempt in our times has been that of Arnold Toynbee, who has created a series of concepts, "withdrawal and return," "internal proletariat," "time of troubles," etc., to "translate" various periods in various civilizations. Toynbee's world view is a mystical, transcendental Christianity essentially reactionary. Because of his enormous erudition (perhaps unique in contemporary historiography), his liberal position in English politics, the urbane tone of his writing as well as a reticence in expressing too often, and too explicitly, his philosophy, Toynbee's reactionary character has not been sufficiently noticed. Life *magazine, however, devoted an enormous amount of space to popularize as much as possible the name of Mr. Toynbee and his concepts. See the review on Toynbee by Paul Sweezy in* The Nation, *Oct. 19, 1946, reprinted in* The Present as History, *Monthly Review Press, 1953.*

There is a passage in *The Holy Family* which says the French political idiom of Proudhon corresponds to and may be translated into the idiom of German classical philosophy. The idea is very important in understanding certain aspects of Marxism, in finding a solution to seeming contradictions in history and in answering certain superficial objections against historical materialism. . . .

Let us see first if this critical principle has been approximated, or confused, by others with analogous formulations. In the Sep-

tember–October, 1930, issue of *New Studies in Law, Economics and Politics* Luigi Einaudi writes an open letter to Rodolfo Benini [two eminent economists of the period] and a note on page 303 says:

> "I wish I had the faculty of my dear departed friend Vailanti who could translate any theory from a geometric language to an algebraic language, hedonism into Kantian ethics, pure economics into applied economics. I would then translate a page of Mr. Spirito into your formal language, classic economics. It would be a fruitful exercise similar to that described by Loria who in his youth took an economic problem and presented it first in the language of Adam Smith, then Ricardo, then Marx, Stuart Mill, and Cairnes. But such exercises can only find their way into a drawer, as did Loria's. They are useful only to teach us humility whenever we think we have found something truly new. Because if this novelty can be presented in the language of our ancients, and be framed in their thought, then it can't be so completely new. However, each generation can and should use the language which better suits it to understand the world. History is constantly rewritten, why shouldn't economics be rewritten, first in terms of cost of production, then utility, then static equilibriums, then dynamic equilibriums?"

This methodological note of Einaudi is very limited and refers to the idioms of scientific personalities rather than to idioms of national cultures. . . . However, it does seem like a first small approximation to the more profound and larger problem posed in *The Holy Family*.

Often two scientists, both shaped fundamentally by the same civilization, believe that they are developing different "truths" because they are using different scientific languages. Similarly two national cultures, shaped by the same civilization, consider themselves different, opposite, antagonistic, each superior to the other only because they used different idioms shaped by differing tradition and activities peculiar to each culture: a political-juridical idiom in France while in Germany the idiom is philosophic, theoretic, and doctrinaire.

For the historian these two cultures can be reciprocally translated. This "translation" may not be exact, of course, even in

important particulars. (But what tongue is perfectly translatable? What single word can be exactly rendered in another tongue?) The important point, however, is that they are basically similar. . . . The observation in *The Holy Family* that the French political idiom is equivalent to the idiom of classic German philosophy was expressed "poetically" by the Italian poet Carducci:

> "A King lost his head to Robespierre,
> Kant send God reeling through the air."

In creating this poetic junction between the practical politics of Maximilian Robespierre and the speculative thinking of Emmanuel Kant, Carducci borrowed this idea from Heine. But the juxtaposition of Robespierre and Kant is not original with Heine. Croce writes that he found a fugitive mention of it in a letter from Hegel to Schelling (July 21, 1795), and it was then developed in Hegel's lessons on the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history. In *Lessons on the History of Philosophy* Hegel says that "the philosophy of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling contains, in the form of thought, a revolution" which has gone forward in Germany and in which "only two peoples have participated, the German and the French, however opposite they are one to the other, in fact just because they are opposite." However, whereas the new principle "erupted in Germany as a spirit and as a concept," in France it was demonstrated as "effective reality."

In *Lessons in the Philosophy of History* Hegel explains that the idea of the formal will, of abstract liberty, by which "the simple unity of self-consciousness, the I, is the absolute independent liberty and the source of all universal determinations," "remained among the Germans as a *tranquil theory* whereas the French willed to execute it practically." . . . This passage of Hegel seems very important as the "source" of the idea expressed in the *Theses on Feuerbach* that "the philosophers have explained the world and the problem now is to change it." Philosophy must become politics to be true, to continue to be philosophy:

"tranquil theory" must be "executed practically," must become "effective reality." This passage of Hegel may also be taken as the source of Engels' statement that the German working class is the heir of German classical philosophy. Finally this passage may be considered an element in the development of the theory of the unity of theory and practice. . . .

Ed. Note: This idea of "translation" of national cultures is interesting but seems at first glance not too useful, except at the low level given by Einaudi of converting one terminology into another. For example, Marxist concepts can be translated into capitalist concepts: the Marxist concept of surplus value is equivalent to the capitalist concepts of profits, interest, capital investment, etc. The ability to effect this translation is important in the field of research because capitalist statistics are governed by capitalist concepts. It is also important in the field of propaganda to get Marxist ideas accepted by people with capitalist concepts in their heads.

However, as Gramsci says, this is a first approximation. At a higher level it means to go below surface similarities or differences to find the more important relations. The statism of the Nazis, for example, and the statism of the New Deal had many points of similarity including economic measures that derived from Keynes in both cases. But in Germany the statism stifled the people and wrecked German capitalism (it was only rescued by the presence of the U.S. Army in the postwar period and by massive infusions of American capital buying into German industry), while in the New Deal statism gave a strong spin to the freedoms of the American people and stabilized American capitalism.

At the level of languages themselves, let us examine the question of metaphors. A well known Marxist metaphor is the traditional one that the "anatomy" of a society is constituted by its "economy." This metaphor came out of the discussions in natural sciences and the classification of animal species, a classification which became "scientific" when it started to be based on anatomy and not on secondary characteristics. Furthermore, this metaphor was justi-

fied by its "popularity," that is, it was easily understood by a not too intellectual public. (Few ever take into account the fact that Marxism, which wishes to develop morally and intellectually those social groups which are culturally backward, often has recourse to metaphors which are terribly vulgarized.)

The linguistic origin of a metaphor for a new concept helps to understand that concept by showing how it emerged in a given cultural world. At the same time it clarifies the limitations of the metaphor so that it should not be used mechanically. In a given epoch, the experimental sciences served as a kind of "model." Since the social sciences, like history and economics, sought an objective foundation which would give them the same stability as the natural sciences, it is easy to understand why the social sciences turned to the physical sciences in creating their own terminologies. Incidentally, from this point of view, we should differentiate between Marx and Engels, as each one's language had different cultural origins and their metaphors reflect different interests.

Marx and Hegel. In the study of the Hegelianism of Marx we must remember that he participated in the German university life shortly after the death of Hegel, when the "oral" teaching of Hegel must have been extremely vivid, and when there must have been passioned discussions which Hegel's teaching certainly stimulated, with references to concrete teachings, so that the historical concreteness of Hegel's thought must have been even clearer than it is in his systematic writings. Certain sayings of Marx seem to me to be especially related to this "conversational" vividness, for example, the saying that Hegel "makes man walk with the head downwards." Hegel uses this very image in speaking of the French revolution. He writes that at a certain moment of the French revolution it seemed "that the world was walking on its head," or something like that. When Croce asks where Marx got this image, I would say that I'm pretty sure that it is in a book of Hegel (perhaps *The Philosophy of Law*), but it really seems as if it flowed out of a conversation, so fresh it is, so spontaneous, so little "bookish."

ABOUT ANTONIO GRAMSCI: From the Editor's INTRODUCTION

Antonio Gramsci is a name practically unknown in America, yet he is one of the leading thinkers of the last half-century. An Italian Marxist, he died in Mussolini's jails in 1937. When he was arrested in 1926 he was 35 years old, married, with one child and another on the way whom he never saw. At the time Gramsci was a Deputy to the Chamber (a Congressman) and secretary of the Communist Party of Italy.

After being moved from jail to jail he was finally transferred to a penitentiary in Bari in July, 1928. For the next six years, until his health completely broke down. Gramsci studied and wrote, filling thirty-two notebooks with notes, observations, and essays. He wrote over a million words, which made up six volumes when they were published between 1947 and 1954. States a recent Italian encyclopedia: "The thirty-two notebooks written in prison constitute a very important document of Italian culture. . . . His letters from prison are outstanding as an expression of humanity as well as culture."

Gramsci is a Marxist of the caliber of the early Kautsky, and he compares favorably with Plekhanov and Rosa Luxemburg. He is a Marxist in the great tradition of Marx himself, a thinker with an open mind, disciplined in the search for truth. The daily newspaper *Ordine Nuovo*, which he edited, carried on its masthead the motto "To Tell the Truth Is Revolutionary." Today, when Marxists throughout the world know the consequences of a lack of probity and sobriety in theory and practice, Gramsci's austere words are fresh and invigorating:

> "We must not conceive of a scientific discussion as if it were a courtroom proceeding in which there are a defendant and a prosecutor who, by duty of his office, must show the defendant guilty. It is a premise in scientific discussion that the interest lies in the search for truth and the advancement of science. Therefore the most 'advanced' thinker is he who understands that his adversary may express a truth which should be incorporated in his own ideas, even if in a minor way. To understand and evaluate realistically the position and reasons of one's adversary (and sometimes the adversary is the entire thought of the past) means to have freed oneself from the prison of ideologies, in the sense of blind fanaticism. One has then arrived at a critical frame of mind, the only fruitful stance in scientific research."

To speak of Gramsci as a Marxist with an open mind may strike many people as a contradiction in terms, because the behavior of a considerable number of Marxists has bolstered ruling class propaganda that Marxism is a dogma. Marxism is not a dogma though there are Marxists who are dogmatists, just as science is not dogma though there are scientists who are dogmatists. Marx himself made this point when he averred that he was no "Marxist."

ABOUT CARL MARZANI, Editor and Translator

A graduate of Williams College and Oxford University, Mr. Marzani has taught economics at New York University. He served in the Spanish Republican militia in 1936. During World War II, he served in the Office of Strategic Services where he achieved prominence as the man who picked the targets for Doolittle's famous raids over Axis Japan. After the war, Marzani held a responsible position in the State Department Intelligence Office until he resigned in protest against the scuttling of Roosevelt's foreign policy. Since then Mr. Marzani has been on the staff of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, which position he left in 1954 to become a co-editor of Liberty Book Club and Executive Vice-President of Cameron Associates.

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